REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 21 (A/45/21)

UNITED NATIONS

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New York, 1990

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67 (resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980). The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-third sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 (General Assembly resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 and 43/60 A). At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Committee on Information, reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session (resolution 44/50 of 8 December 1989).

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely, China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee, and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member of the Committee, bringing the total membership to 74.

5. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belgium
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Cyprus
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
German Democratic Republic
Germany, Federal Republic of
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Singapore
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zimbabwe

II. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Opening of the session

6. The twelfth session of the Committee was convened at United Nations Headquarters on 5 April 1990. The Chairman and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information made introductory statements (see annexes I and II).

B. Welcoming of new member

7. The Committee welcomed the representative of Nepal as a new member.

C. Election of officers

8. Upon nomination by the representative of the German Democratic Republic, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr. Alexandre N. Boutsko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the unexpired period, that is, until the end of 1990, of the term of office of Mr. Gerhard Haensel (German Democratic Republic), who had resigned.

D. Organization of work of the Committee

9. The Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Welcoming of new member.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Election of officers.

5. Substantive questions:

   (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

   (b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;

(c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

6. Other business.

10. The twelfth session of the Committee on Information took place at United Nations Headquarters from 5 April to 2 May 1990.

11. For the consideration of item 5 of the agenda, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information, 3/ submitted pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in section II, paragraph 4, of its resolution 44/50, of 8 December 1989;

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the public information activities of the United Nations against the policies and practices of apartheid, 4/ submitted pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/50, section II, paragraph 1, recommendation (2) (e);

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on the public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine 5/ submitted pursuant to the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/50, section II, paragraph 1, recommendation (2) (g);

(d) Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. Major programme VIII - Public information, Programme 38 - Public information. This document was submitted for review by the Committee, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of needs for technical assistance to radio stations that are broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa (A/44/698) and report of the Secretary-General on a study of existing and potential interest in broadcasting United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes and the extent to which audiences in selected urban centres in South Africa listen to them (A/45/162). These two reports were submitted pursuant to the requests made by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 (b) and (c) of its resolution 43/50 H of 5 December 1988.

12. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Afghanistan, Angola, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, Gabon, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Jamaica, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Sweden, Uruguay and Zambia. The representatives of the Holy See, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland also paprticipated as observers.

13. Representatives of the following specialized agencies were present: International Labour Organisation (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

14. In addition, representatives of the League of Arab States and of the World Federation of United Nations Associations were present.

15. The Committee on Information decided to establish a working group and to conduct further informal consultations through the spokesmen for the regional groups and China.

E. Other business

16. The Chairman informed the Committee that Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay had requested membership in the Committee. The Committee, supporting these requests, decided to recommend to the General Assembly the enlargement of the Committee on Information from 74 to 78 members and to submit the candidacy of Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay to the General Assembly for approval (see para. 76, draft decisions I and II).

III. SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

17. Statements during the general debate were made by or on behalf of the following States members of the Committee: Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland (on behalf of the Nordic countries), the German Democratic Republic, India, Indonesia, Ireland (on behalf of the States members of the European Economic Community), Japan, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States), United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia and Zimbabwe. A statement was also made by the observer for Czechoslovakia.

A. Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information

18. In addressing the issue of a new world information and communication order, a large number of delegations welcomed the positive changes of the past year in the world that had significantly altered the international situation, creating favourable conditions for greater dialogue and understanding, as well as for enhanced international co-operation. Many representatives noted the important link between a free flow of information and the historic developments that had taken place at the national and international levels. The hope was expressed that the favourable political climate would help to improve the situation pertaining to information and communication, while at the same time information and communication would play an increasing role in shaping international relations and co-operation in an interdependent world.

19. In the view of most delegations, the spirit of the time was best reflected by the consensual adoption by UNESCO, at its twenty-fifth General Conference held in November 1989 in Paris, of a new strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity" based on freedom of information and on international co-operation. Many delegations expressed support for the strategy, which underscored the need to encourage the free flow of information at the international and national levels, promote the wider and more balanced dissemination of information without any obstacle to the freedom of expression, and develop all the appropriate means of strengthening communication capacities in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process. The view was expressed that the achievements of the General Conference represented a balanced effort to address the call for a new world information and communication order and the concern for freedom of information.

20. Many representatives expressed the hope that the improved international atmosphere, of which both the breakthrough achieved by UNESCO at its twenty-fifth General Conference and the progress made by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session were a reflection, would inspire the Committee in its efforts at reaching agreement over still outstanding issues on a common approach.

21. A large number of delegations affirmed their commitment to the fundamental principles of freedom of information. It was emphasized that freedom of information was a basic human right and the touchstone of all freedoms and human rights, and that the right to hold and express one's opinion was fundamental to the development of a just and democratic society. The fact that freedom of information required the willingness and capacity to employ its privileges without abuse, to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 59 (I) of 14 December 1946, was also underlined by some delegations. The view was also expressed by some delegations that, in ensuring free dissemination of and access to information, the sovereignty of States and their social values and cultural traditions had to be respected.

22. One representative, speaking on behalf of several others, regretted that despite the recent positive developments, freedom of information was too often violated. Condemning violations of freedom of the press wherever they occurred, he paid a tribute to the 71 journalists who died in 1989 in the exercise of their profession.

23. One representative referring to television broadcasts from another country said that those broadcasts violated both his country's sovereignty and decisions by the Frequency Board of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Experts from his country were therefore blocking the transmission of those broadcasts. That representative emphasized that a really free flow of information would require an agreed upon exchange of information in both directions. Another representative, emphasizing the integrity of those broadcasts, stated that their sole purpose was to provide information not otherwise available and that they did not interfere with the national television. An advisory opinion from ITU had been received by his Government and was under study.

24. The view was expressed that freedom of information was also of critical importance to the development and welfare of society and to the promotion of understanding between peoples and different cultures. In today's highly interdependent world, economic development and social progress could be achieved only if there was a free flow of information, with adequate channels of communication on both the national and international levels.

25. A number of delegations reiterated their concern that, although developments in mass communication had transformed the world into a "global village", disparities remained, and were aggravated even further, in the distribution of means of communication and in the information flow between the developed and developing countries. The communications technology of the developed world had widened the information gap. The quest for some balance in that regard continued therefore to be a major challenge.

26. It was in that context that delegations concerned reiterated their call for a new world information and communication order. The view was expressed that a new information order carried the best hope for reducing the disparities existing between the information systems of the developing and developed world and ensuring a two-way flow of information. It was emphasized that support for a new information order was based not on any opposition to the principle of free flow of information and ideas, or on an avowed ambition to undermine freedom of the press, but on the fact that the current situation was incompatible with that fundamental principle. The view was also expressed that guaranteed access to information and communication

technologies for all nations, and assistance on the part of developed countries, were key elements of the comprehensive democratic restructuring of international information relations.

27. It was thus understood on the part of many delegations that the implication of the call for the free flow of information and its wider and better balanced dissemination without any obstacle to the freedom of expression was essentially a call for further improving the practical possibilities of developing countries to participate more fully in the exchange of information. It did not imply a balance concerning the content of information, nor the restriction of anyone's possibilities to exchange and disseminate information. It was also understood that freedom of expression and the fullest possible facilities of access to information were guaranteed.

28. One delegation, speaking on behalf of several others, acknowledged the disparities existing between developed and developing countries that affected the capability of the public, private and other media and individuals in developing countries, to disseminate information and communicate their views. There was also recognition on the part of those delegations of the need to strengthen communications capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communications technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training of journalists and other communication professionals, and dissemination of information, so as to assure to the populations of those countries the full benefits of freedom of information.

29. Several delegations drew attention to the activity of the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, as part of the efforts by those countries to overcome the information gap between the developed and the developing world. However, in view of scarce resources, the participation of some non-aligned countries in that Pool was limited, and assistance to those countries was required from the United Nations and all those countries capable of and willing to render such assistance. In the view of a number of delegations, developed countries should commit themselves on concessional terms to assist developing countries in building up their communication infrastructure.

30. In that connection, a large number of delegations expressed the view that the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) of UNESCO, as an important element in the implementation of its new strategy for communication, was an essential instrument for the development of global communication and information in general, and the development of infrastructure and strengthening of the capacities of communication in the developing countries in particular. As such, IPDC could play an important role in the field of co-operation between developed and developing countries. Emphasis was placed on the need to strengthen the Special Account of IPDC in cash or kind and to ensure a closer co-operation between IPDC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

31. Many delegations, while expressing regret that the Committee had not been able to reach a consensus in past years, noted with satisfaction that differences had been narrowed through intensive consultations between the Chairman and spokesmen for the regional groups and China. An appeal was made for members of the Committee to demonstrate the necessary political will to reach an agreement, and the hope was expressed that the Committee at its current session would make a significant contribution to overcoming the differences that had prevailed for so long in its

work. Once that consensus was achieved, the Committee should be able to devote its task to analysing more fully the work of the Department of Public Information and providing the Department with a practical and flexible mandate, in particular for the benefit of developing countries.

B. Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order

C. Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications

32. The members of the Committee generally welcomed the report of the Secretary-General 3/ and the detailed oral report by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information on the activities of the Department of Public Information. A large number of delegations supported the new approaches adopted by the Department under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General and noted that, through structural reform and technological innovation, the Department had substantially improved the quality and delivery of its multi-faceted information products and scored commendable successes in bringing the United Nations to the people of the world in a more expeditious and more comprehensive fashion.

33. The Department was urged by several representatives to pay still closer attention to the concerns of the developing countries in its future operations and to continue to cover adequately and publicize the adjustment efforts of those countries.

34. The majority of delegations commended the Department especially for its multi-media information programme on the independence process in Namibia and the operation of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG). One delegation suggested that the Department use its experience in Namibia to promote understanding of the role of the Organization in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Another delegation urged the Department to make available to television stations that so request, the complete film on the transition of Namibia to independence. Yet another delegation noted that the coverage of Namibia's independence celebrations could have been more elaborate, and expressed the hope that the upcoming admission of Namibia to the United Nations would find a more comprehensive coverage.

35. One delegation was particularly appreciative of the publicity given by the Department to the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) and to the Central American peace process.

36. Several members of the Committee expressed satisfaction with the public opinion polls commissioned by the Department about awareness of the United Nations and its activities in various countries and, supporting the extension of such polls to other countries in various geographical areas, expressed the hope that the

results would be of further help to the communication strategies of the Department. One representative was pleased that the results of the public opinion poll conducted in his country allowed the Government to draw all the necessary conclusions on steps to be taken towards refining the methods of disseminating information on the United Nations to the national audience, and looked forward to close collaboration with the Department in that regard.

37. A large number of delegations paid a tribute to the Department and its efforts to fulfil its mandates. In particular, the work of its Executive Media Service was commended by a number of representatives for the quality and timeliness of its information services both to the press and to the delegations of Member States. In contrast, one delegation voiced its concern that the restructuring and performance of the Department had fallen short of expectations. In that connection, that delegation called for more activities in sensitizing international public opinion on the major unsolved issues of peace, security and development and cited the backlog in certain publications.

38. The Department was urged to continue to focus attention on areas of special concern to Member States. Those areas included the eradication of apartheid, the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the right of peoples to self-determination and decolonization, the situation in the Middle East, the question of Palestine and the Palestinian intifadah, international peace and security, disarmament, the promotion of human rights, the status of women, drug abuse, the environment and development, African economic recovery, the problems of economic and social development, including those of the least developed countries, and the promotion of international economic co-operation aimed at resolving foreign debt problems.

39. Commenting on the new approaches adopted by the Department for the effective implementation of its programmes on specific topics, various delegations praised the Department for its efforts in promoting special sessions and other events, such as the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly, which dealt with apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa; the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly, to consider the question of international co-operation against illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs; the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, which was devoted to international economic co-operation, in particular to the revitalization of economic growth and development of the developing countries; and the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

40. One delegation drew attention to the fact that the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was probably the most important United Nations event of the decade, thus deserving a comprehensive information programme and full coverage by the Department from its earliest stages on. Another delegation asked the Department to launch an information campaign in view of the forthcoming Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Yet another delegation urged the Department to give the widest publicity to the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Department was also requested by one delegation to make a concerted effort in promoting various international conventions adopted by the General Assembly, in particular, the recent International Convention against the Recruitment, Financing and Training of Mercenaries.

41. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General on public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, 5/ several delegations welcomed the important role played by the Department in promoting the objectives of the United Nations in that area, and requested the Department to continue its work.

42. With regard to the public information activities of the United Nations against the policies and practices of apartheid, as reflected in document A/AC.198/1990/3, delegations addressing the question requested the Department to continue to give special attention to that priority issue. The view was expressed that one of the most effective ways of achieving the goal of reaching all South Africans was to give the necessary technical and financial assistance to those States willing to broadcast to South Africa.

43. Commenting on the assessment of needs for technical assistance to radio stations broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa, as reflected in document A/44/698, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 43/50 H of 5 December 1988, two delegations requested that the Secretariat provide a clearer indication of the planned funding of the technical assistance programmes that would enable individual radio stations in four African countries to be heard inside South Africa. Given the repressive political conditions in South Africa, one delegation had some doubts about the results of the listenership survey of United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes in South Africa, as reflected in document A/45/162. That delegation observed that the survey had serious technical limitations because of the difficulties faced by radio broadcasts in reaching South Africa. A further survey was needed when the technical capacity for the broadcasts to reach South Africa had been enhanced. That delegation also stressed the need for a concerted effort to beam the anti-apartheid programmes to the rest of the international community where South Africa was making propaganda inroads, particularly to countries with trade ties with the apartheid régime.

44. A number of delegations spoke of the importance of the radio programme of the Department in their regions of the world. In that context, one representative expressed the hope that the future of Portuguese language broadcasting was ensured. While noting with satisfaction the continuation of the taped radio programme in the Bahasa Indonesian language, one delegation called upon the Department to bring about an improvement of the programme, including the re-establishment of a post. Another delegation asked for the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Asian Regional Programme Unit. One representative also called for the strengthening of the Middle East radio unit. The trend towards collaboration between the Department and radio stations of developing countries was encouraged.

45. With regard to the publications and other printed materials produced by the Department, one delegation emphasized that they represented vital educational materials in a period when there was no foreign exchange to buy books, and suggested that they be made available to institutions of higher learning in developing countries. That delegation commended the Department for its publication Africa Recovery, which was considered to be one of the most authentic and up-to-date periodicals on the economic and social crisis facing Africa. Although satisfied with the preparation and dissemination of Africa Recovery magazine, another delegation believed that more should be done in highlighting the environmental plight of Africa as well.

46. One delegation requested that publications by the Department on major themes be printed in all official languages. Another delegation was particularly interested in the translation of United Nations documents into the vernacular, not only to reduce costs but to facilitate information access to a wide variety of population groups in countries faced with problems arising from the multiplicity of languages.

47. Many members of the Committee underlined the important role of United Nations information centres, as essential tools for disseminating information on the United Nations and promoting awareness of and support for the world organization. It was pointed out that centres were an important communication link between the Department and Member States, and sometimes the only permanent link between the United Nations, local media, educational and cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations. Several delegations expressed support for the modernization and enhancement of the technical capabilities of the centres.

48. One delegation noted that a new task that the United Nations information centres were facing was the collection in the respective host countries of publicly available information on questions relating to peace and security, as was proposed by a group of States in the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. Another delegation wished to know what machinery and procedures existed to co-ordinate information activities in countries having no information centres.

49. A number of delegations called for a further strengthening and upgrading of United Nations information centres in order to cope better with new challenges in the information field. One representative called for a strengthening of centres, in particular, in the Arab world. Expressing the view that centres in Africa were inadequate, given the vastness of the continent, one delegation requested that those centres also be strengthened and upgraded. In addition, the new Namibian nation should be assisted in the establishment of a United Nations information centre.

50. One representative expressed doubts that UNDP resident representatives could combine their functions with those of running United Nations information centres. He regretted that the post of Centre Director at Dar es Salaam remained vacant, and urged that the post be filled promptly. Another representative expressed dissatisfaction that the Director's post at the Dhaka information centre had been vacant for more than three years.

51. A number of delegations welcomed the efforts made by the Department to strengthen its ties with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, and urged the Department to pursue its co-operation also with the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with other news agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations. The co-operation of the Department with the Pool was cited as an important step towards supporting the information structures in developing countries and in helping to bring about a more balanced international flow of information.

52. The organization of round tables at Headquarters and the launching of outreach programmes for media specialists were highlighted among the major endeavours of the Department to expand and strengthen its ties with media representatives in various geographical regions.

53. One delegation suggested that journalists be dispatched from the United Nations to regions where its resolutions were being ignored or gravely violated.

54. Welcoming the provisions made by the Department to continue its training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, some delegations expressed the hope that more countries would benefit from that programme, which was considered helpful in enhancing young professionals' awareness of the work of the United Nations. A few delegations requested that that programme be intensified. It also further suggested that the Department undertake an evaluation of its training programme.

55. One delegation, strongly supporting the activities of the United Nations Correspondents Association, urged the Department to extend all facilities to Association members in the discharge of their professional duties.

56. Some delegations called upon the Department to take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts, especially at senior levels and in the technical units of the Department, while other delegations emphasized that that principle should apply only to the Secretariat as a whole. One representative requested information on steps taken by the Secretariat to increase commensurately personnel with regional expertise in the anti-apartheid radio unit of the Department, in response to resolution 43/50 H, paragraph 1 (d), and asked for detailed information on the regional distribution of posts in that unit.

57. Another representative, although satisfied with the activities of the Department, was concerned about the fact that the number of posts in the Photo Unit had been reduced, thereby affecting its efficiency. He called for an improvement of that service and for continued attention to the important information medium of news photographs.

58. Commenting on the work of the Committee itself, some delegations pointed to the need for the Committee to provide the Department with a flexible mandate, which would enable the Department to react to a rapidly changing world and to new demands made on it by Member States. One delegation, speaking on behalf of several others, expressed the view that the Committee had often failed to reach agreement on an appropriate mandate for the Department, not because of irreconcilable differences but because the Committee had been distracted by considerations of matters not related to the Department's work.

59. Another delegation noted that demands were often placed on the Department without always bearing in mind its real capabilities, and urged that the necessary resources be secured for the Department to meet such demands. Several delegations expressed agreement with the text of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as issued in mimeographed form under the symbol A/45/6. In the course of implementing that plan, one representative wished to see enhanced co-ordination with all substantive departments of the Secretariat. In that context, attention should be given to strengthening co-operation and co-ordination through the Joint United Nations Information Committee. Another representative expressed the hope that resources would be made available to enable the Department to implement the medium-term plan.

60. At the closing of the debate, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information provided additional information on the work of the Department and responded to specific questions posed by delegations. She was most appreciative of

the many compliments that had been paid to all the staff of the Department, noting that all the comments made, whether complimentary or critical, guided and inspired the Department in becoming an ever more efficient and effective tool for the achievement of the Organization's goals.

61. Recalling that the resources that would be required in order to provide an improvement of the technical broadcasting facilities in four front-line States were estimated at $US 9.7 million, the Under-Secretary-General pointed out that the programmme budget of the Department of Public Information did not provide for such expenses and that it could not be left to the Secretariat to fund such assistance programmes. Should it be the wish of the General Assembly to include such expenses in the regular budget, specific provision would need to be included in the resolution on the programme budget, the approval of which was the prerogative of the Member States.

62. With regard to the listenership survey conducted in South Africa and to the public opinion poll conducted at the same time, she expressed confidence in the integrity of MARKINOR, the organization that undertook the poll, and observed that doubts about MARKINOR, which had been identified through the assistance of the British Broadcasting Corporation, would have applied to any other agency based in South Africa.

63. Of the Professional staff of the Anti-apartheid Radio Section, the Under-Secretary-General indicated that 69 per cent were currently nationals of African countries and 19 per cent of the North American and Caribbean region. There were at present two vacant posts, the functions of which were being performed by special service contractors, pending recruitment of regular staff members. Programmes were currently produced in English, Portuguese, Sesotho, Setswana, Xhosa and Zulu, while the Afrikaans adaptations had been temporarily suspended pending formal agreements by broadcasting stations to accept and use programmes in that language.

64. Radio material continued to be produced in Portuguese. A weekly magazine programme was provided on tape to 156 recipients in Africa, Europe, Brazil and other parts of Latin America. A telephone feed news bulletin was produced every working day and taken by radio organizations in Brazil and other Latin American countries and in Africa, at their expense. The text of another radio news bulletin was adapted into Portuguese by the United Nations information centres at Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon, which provided them to broadcasting organizations, news agencies and print media in Brazil and Portugal, respectively.

65. The Department continued to produce radio programmes in 19 languages and gave every attention to the quality of all outputs. Furthermore, the Department continued to be alert to the possibilities of increasing its outreach through all available means.

66. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information said that she was encouraged by the many statements of appreciation made on the effective multi-media public information activities undertaken in connection with the UNTAG operation and the independence of Namibia. With regard to plans for the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Namibia, she would consult representatives of the new nation on that question during her forthcoming visit to Namibia. The Secretary-General would report to the General Assembly on the outcome of those

consultations to ensure the provision of adequate resources, should it be the wish of the Namibian Government that a centre be established at Windhoek.

67. While sharing with many delegations the regret that much more detailed coverage had not been provided by the media of the independence celebrations held at Windhoek on 21 March 1990, she observed that such coverage was obviously beyond the possibilities of the Department. In addition to extensive radio and print coverage, the Department had produced various short video spots on Namibia, as well as three feature-length documentaries dealing with the registration process, including the return of refugees, with the electoral process and with the act of independence and the development needs of the new nation following independence, respectively. The Department would ensure full coverage of activities related to the admission of Namibia to United Nations membership, which was scheduled to take place later in the month.

68. Referring to national and regional news agencies other than the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, the Under-Secretary-General assured the Committee of the readiness of the Department of Public Information to co-operate with those agencies in a mutually agreeable manner, to ensure the widest possible dissemination of United Nations materials throughout the world.

69. With regard to the United Nations information centres, she observed that almost 30 centres were headed by UNDP resident representatives who also acted as directors of the centres, rather than by full-time centre directors. Noting that the Department did not have the necessary financial and human resources that would be otherwise required, she recalled that the Department had endured reductions in posts, pursuant to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986. Nevertheless, the Department endeavoured to strengthen the functioning of all centres through increased staff training and the introduction of modern technology.

70. As far as departmental publications were concerned, she pointed out that there was a delay only in the issuance of the Yearbook of the United Nations. The lack of timeliness of that publication was a chronic problem that could be traced back to at least the early 1970s. She observed that, in the past three years, a new volume had been published every 11 or 12 months, compared to a 22-month delay between the volumes published in 1983 and 1985. That was not to say that the present situation was satisfactory, for the Department was committed to a definitive solution. An internal evaluation of the Yearbook was being undertaken, the results of which would be reported to the Committee at its next session.

71. With regard to the suggestion that publications of the Department of Public Information should be made available to higher educational institutions of developing countries, she would favour accommodating that request in a prompt manner. In view of the known budgetary constraints, however, she would suggest consulting with interested delegations.

72. Concerning the Department's training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, the Under-Secretary-General observed that those programmes were more of a sensitization or orientation nature rather than training, and that the capacity to enlarge them was limited by budgetary constraints.

73. While the guidelines of the General Assembly with regard to geographical representation of staff applied to the Secretariat as a whole, she fully recognized the necessity for the Department of Public Information in particular to be as equitably composed as possible, in order to deserve the full confidence of all countries. The Department stood rather well when compared to the desirable mid-points established for the Secretariat as a whole. Nevertheless, she remained committed to further refinement and improvement in that regard.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

74. As indicated in paragraph 15 above, the Committee on Information established a working group and conducted further informal consultations through the spokesmen of regional groups and China.

75. At its 9th meeting, on 2 May 1990, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions, on the understanding that it would be left to the Special Political Committee to agree on the preambular paragraphs that might be added to them:

Draft resolution I

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources of and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

1. Co-operate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

2. Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

3. Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

4. Enhance regional efforts and co-operation among developing countries, as well as co-operation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication

technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

5. Aim, in addition to bilateral co-operation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in the developing countries, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(a) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(b) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in developing countries, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(c) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

6. Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution II

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly

1. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions:

(1) The United Nations system as a whole should co-operate in a concerted manner, through its information services and the co-ordination of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, in promoting a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system in all its endeavours, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the creation of a climate of confidence, the strengthening of multilateralism and the promotion of the development activities in the United Nations system;

(2) Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, co-ordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information, the Secretary-General is requested to ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the

purposes and principles of the Charter, the priority areas defined by the Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, so as to ensure an objective and more coherent coverage of, as well as better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work. The Secretary-General should ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Co-operate more regularly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, especially at the working level, with a view to maximizing the contribution of the Department to the efforts of that organization;

(b) Enhance its co-operation with news agencies of and in the developing countries, in particular, the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies of Non-Aligned Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with other news agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations;

(c) Continue to disseminate, in co-ordination with the information services of other relevant agencies, information about United Nations activities pertaining, inter alia, to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories;

(v) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(vi) Human rights;

(vii) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(viii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

(ix) The problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic co-operation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiii) The international fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking;

(d) Do its utmost to disseminate widely and to publicize the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 6/ and the tremendous efforts of the African countries towards recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(e) Enhance the effectiveness of its activities and the dissemination of information on United Nations activities against the policies and practices of apartheid, giving due attention to the unilateral measures and official censorship imposed on the local and international media with regard to all aspects of that issue;

(f) Continue to disseminate information about activities of the United Nations directed at a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of international conflicts by exclusively peaceful means, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization;

(g) Continue to cover all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, and current developments in that region, and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session, in 1991;

(3) The Department of Public Information should continue its efforts in promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and in strengthening the image of the United Nations system as a whole and, in this connection, it is recommended that the Secretary-General should ensure that the Department:

(a) Continue to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material that it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(b) In the context of the review of its role, performance and methods of work, continue to apply appropriate modern technologies for the collection, production, storage, dissemination and distribution of information materials, including the use of satellite facilities;

(c) Consider expanding the programme of telephone news bulletins that are paid for by its users;

(d) Continue its co-operation with those countries that have expressed readiness to assist the United Nations in resuming the short-wave broadcasts through their respective national networks free of charge and encourage expansion of such a type of co-operation with those developed and developing countries with recognized capabilities in this field;

(e) Take adequate measures to resume the taped radio programmes, which it has temporarily curtailed, if so requested by broadcasting stations;

(f) Continue its briefing, assistance and orientation programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(g) Provide on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of co-operation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the infrastructure of developing countries in the field of information and communication;

(h) Co-operate with educational institutions of Member States, educators and education policy makers, informing them about United Nations activities;

(i) Ensure adequate daily coverage of United Nations open meetings in the two working languages of the Secretariat, reflecting the views of all delegations with accuracy and objectivity. The Department should also continue to co-operate closely with and provide assistance to members of the United Nations Correspondents' Association, taking into account their needs and requirements, especially in the area of press releases, press conferences and briefings, which provide them with basic information for reporting;

(j) Use the official languages of the United Nations adequately in its documents and audio-visual documentation and make balanced use of the two working languages of the Secretariat;

(k) Ensure timely distribution of its material to subscribers and to United Nations information centres;

(4) The Department of Public Information should produce and distribute its publications in a timely manner. In particular, the Secretary-General is requested to make further efforts regarding the timely appearance of the Yearbook of the United Nations. The improvement in format and printing of the UN Chronicle is welcome. The Department is encouraged to continue to consider the interests of the specific target audiences as it formulates its editorial policies;

(5) The Secretary-General is requested to expedite his consultations regarding the provision of the appropriate technical and financial assistance to those States which are broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa in order to enable their radio transmitters to be heard inside South Africa, as identified in his report, 7/ in fulfilment of the mandate of the General Assembly reflected in paragraph 1 of that report, and to report to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session;

(6) The Secretary-General is urged to continue his efforts to secure a sound and stable financial basis for the publications Development Forum and Africa Recovery;

(7) It is recognized that United Nations information centres constitute an important means of disseminating information about the United Nations among the people of the world. In this regard, United Nations information centres should intensify direct and systematic communication exchange with local media, information and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Department should arrange for periodic evaluation of the centres' activities in this regard. It should continue to co-ordinate closely with other field offices of the United Nations system, particularly those of the United Nations Development Programme, in order to avoid duplication of work, taking into account the functional autonomy that the United Nations information centres should have. The Department should provide open and unhindered access by all people to all United Nations information centres and to all materials distributed through the centres. It is also urged to pursue the process of linking the remaining United Nations information centres that have not been linked with electronic mail;

(8) Stressing the need for co-ordinating the information activities of the United Nations system and recognizing the important role that the Joint United

Nations Information Committee plays in that regard, the Department of Public Information is encouraged to continue its active participation in the work of that Committee;

(9) It is recognized that free distribution of materials is necessary in the public information activities of the United Nations. However, as demands increase and whenever it is desirable and possible, the Department of Public Information should actively encourage the sale of its materials;

(10) In view of the importance of radio programmes in developing countries, the Secretary-General is requested to enhance the efficiency of and to ensure full programme delivery by all regional radio units, namely, the African, Asian, Caribbean, European, Latin American and Middle Eastern Units and the Anti-Apartheid Programmes Section, including production of radio programmes called for in General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983;

(11) All reports by the Secretary-General, as well as by representatives of the Department of Public Information, to the Committee on Information and to the General Assembly, in particular on new programmes or on the expansion of existing programmes, should contain:

(a) Detailed information on the output of the Department on each topic included in its work programme, which forms the basis of its programme budget;

(b) The costs of the activities undertaken on each topic;

(c) Adequate information on target audiences, end-use of the Department's products and analysis of feedback data received by the Department;

(d) A statement detailing the priority level that the Secretary-General has attached to current or future activities of the Department in documents dealing with such activities;

(e) The Department's evaluation of the effectiveness of its different programmes and activities, with particular reference to the need constantly to review internal programme elements and activities;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations relating to the activities of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the budgetary procedures as approved by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986, 42/211 of 21 December 1987, 43/213 of 21 December 1988 and 44/200 B of 21 December 1989, and taking into account the priorities set by the Assembly;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its thirteenth session in 1991 on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

4. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

5. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session;

6. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-sixth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

76. Also at its 9th meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decisions:

Draft decision I

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 74 to 78 members.

Draft decision II

Appointment of four members of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly appoints Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members of the Committee on Information.

77. At the same meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to take note of the note by the Secretary-General 8/ and of the programme on public information of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/45/6 (Prog. 38)), and to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the proposed medium-term plan for the programme on public information (programme 38).

78. Statements in explanation of position following these decisions were made by the representatives of Bolivia (on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77), the Netherlands (on behalf of the Western European and other States), the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (on behalf of the Eastern European States), Ireland (on behalf of the States members of the European Community), the United States of American and Yemen).

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/35/21).

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21).

3/ A/AC.198/1990/2.

4/ A/AC.198/1990/3.

5/ A/AC.198/1990/4.

Notes (continued)

6/ Resolution S-13/2, annex.

7/ A/44/698, paras. 35 and 36.

8/ A/AC.198/1990/5.

ANNEX I

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information
at the opening of its twelfth session

I am pleased to be here among so many friends and colleagues whose dedication to the work of the Committee on Information and the United Nations is well known. All of you have served and continue to serve the cause of peace through your dedication and commitment.

At the outset of this session, I wish to welcome Nepal as a new member of the Committee on Information. Nepal's membership attests to the importance of the Committee. I am confident that the Committee will benefit from the wisdom of the Nepalese delegation.

As your Chairman, I shall co-operate with all delegations and work tirelessly to fulfil the trust you have in me and other members of the Bureau.

I wish also to assure the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, and the staff of the Department of Public Information of the co-operation and support of the Bureau. With the support of the Committee and good will all around, we should be able to make this a historic session.

The Committee, at its eleventh session, in 1989, achieved tangible progress in the field of information and communication. The discussions and negotiations of the eleventh session were marked by a constructive and frank exchange of views. I wish to note the strenuous and commendable efforts of the Spokesmen of the regional groups and China. They were instrumental in the progress we achieved. The efforts of the eleventh session were certainly not in vain. That session formed the basis of the resolution of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the hallmark of which was compromise and flexibility. I look forward to that spirit of co-operation in this twelfth session of our Committee.

The world is at a significant political conjuncture; one that offers new challenges and opportunities - the opportunity to build a new world based on brotherhood, co-operation and progress for all. Our challenge is to ensure that this opportunity is not frittered away by recrimination, a return to old thinking and the perpetuation of social injustice. In particular, the twin challenge before the Committee on Information should be to exploit the atmosphere in the world today to reach the elusive consensus on the call for a new world information and communication order, which has as a principal component the enhancement of the media capacities of the developing world, so that our world may be further enriched through its rich and myriad cultures. Equally important, attention should focus on the concern for freedom of information and the plurality of the sources, as well as ownership of the means of communication.

The path to consensus was shown by the twenty-fifth General Conference of UNESCO which, in a demonstration of the mature spirit of this time, adopted by unanimous agreement its medium-term plan and the resolution on major programme IV, titled Communication in the service of humanity.

The agreement achieved at the General Conference committed the Organization, among other things, to:

(a) Encouraging the free flow of information at the international as well as the national level;

(b) Promoting the wider and better balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression;

(c) Developing all the appropriate means of strengthening communication capacities in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process.

The Department of Public Information is a major arm of this Organization. Without the Department, activities of the United Nations would be known by only a few people. Despite its shrinking share of the Organization's resources, the Department has been able to keep up its publicity activities. Its success was seen in its impressive publicity on the Namibian independence process and its preparation for the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation, in particular, to the revitalization of economic growth and development of the developing countries, scheduled to be held in New York from 24 to 28 April 1990.

Certainly, the Department of Public Information could do more if given the resources and if all Member States are agreed on its mandate. Our task, therefore, is to give clear directives to the Department to enable it to address key issues of concern to Member States, such as the campaign against apartheid, the question of Palestine, human rights, environmental issues, the status of women, disarmament, the economic and social crisis facing developing countries and the international campaign against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. In addition, the efforts of the Department of Public Information to build up its capacity to cope with dramatic changes in the world of communication and information should be supported.

We are on the threshold of a new history. This Committee should be in the vanguard of that new history by showing that co-operation, rather than confrontation, flexibility, rather than rigidity, are the norm of our new world; a new world that should bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries, between the North and the South and between the rich and the poor. The challenge is ours.

ANNEX II

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the twelfth session of the Committee on Information. It is with great satisfaction that, on behalf of the Secretariat, I join you in greeting the newest member of the Committee, Nepal.

I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Bureau and the Committee as a whole, of my commitment and that of the staff of the Department of Public Information to assist you and to give you all the support necessary in carrying out your important task.

Your patience, tact and diplomatic skills, Sir, guarantee - as was amply demonstrated last year - that the Committee will make further progress in the elaboration of guidelines for the role of the United Nations in the field of information and for the activities of my Department.

As is customary, I will shortly introduce the various reports which the Secretary-General has been called upon to present to or through the Committee on Information and provide you with some additional insights on the functioning of the Department of Public Information. Before doing so, however, I feel compelled to say a few words about one of the most significant events in the life of our Organization, one which is still fresh in our minds and in our emotions. I refer, of course, to the birth, barely a fortnight ago, of the new nation of Namibia.

If I speak with some emotion on this subject it is because of the satisfaction we all feel to see crowned with success the long and arduous efforts of the Namibian people and of the international community towards this goal. It is also because all of us in the Secretariat feel deeply involved in this process either through personal participation in UNTAG or, as was the case for most of us, through the support offered from Headquarters to that mission. In the case of the Department of Public Information, no less than 45 staff members were detailed for service with UNTAG in various capacities, not all related to information, and on this occasion I would wish to pay tribute to them for their selfless and dedicated service. I wish also to take this occasion to place on record my deep appreciation to all the staff of the Department of Public Information, at Headquarters and away from Headquarters, who performed with great devotion, not only in support of the UNTAG mission, but by assuming additional duties of those who went to Namibia, in order to ensure that the work of the Department should continue at a high level.

The distinguished delegates are aware that the information programme on the independence process of Namibia has featured prominently in the Department's activities - in the field and at Headquarters as well. The public information service of UNTAG, including the spokesman for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, consisted of six staff members of the Department.

Based upon a comprehensive information strategy developed by us with UNTAG, which was concerned with providing Namibians with the required information, radio and television programmes such as UN in Action and World Chronicle, three documentaries, brochures, posters and pamphlets explaining in several languages the United Nations mandate in Namibia have been produced by DPI and distributed world wide. In addition, press kits and an information package, which included print and

video material designed for use by television services in African countries, were produced and distributed.

Two outreach programmes proved to be a success: a speaking tour to several African capitals in April 1989, and a Namibian news mission last November. The last project was particularly effective, in that it brought to Namibia a large group of journalists from the front-line and personnel-contributing countries from Africa, for a first-hand look at the process of organizing free and fair elections. This project was in fact crucial to ensuring that the Namibian elections and their results were reported first-hand on the African continent.

In connection with Namibia's independence, two television spots have been produced in English, French, Spanish and Afrikaans. On the day before independence, CNN in its world programme featured Department of Public Information video material drawing attention to the forthcoming event. For independence day, we released a booklet in English, French and Spanish on Namibia's economic and social outlook. In conjunction with Namibia's admission to the United Nations later this month, a photo exhibit will be mounted, entitled "Namibia: New Nation, New Needs".

The Department is organizing a second journalists' tour to that country on 20 April to give top journalists from major mass media an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the basic economic and social issues facing the Namibian nation. In this regard, consultations with the United Nations Council for Namibia have been maintained on a regular basis with a view to adjusting the programme we were mandated to carry out. The continuing DPI information programme will highlight the international donors' meeting on assistance to the new-born nation initiated by the Secretary-General and scheduled for June 1990.

Over the last years, the Organization has further increased its potential as a unique forum for the collective search for peace and development. We see a further strengthening of the positive image of the United Nations and a new awareness among peoples of its values and its purposes that touch directly their lives and their perception of the future. The Secretariat, in its public information activities, has had to respond to the expectations of the international community for the Organization.

In this connection, I also wish to state that the multifaceted public information tasks of the United Nations have to be conducted in compliance with the technological and perceptional requirements of a super-media world, the emergence of which has taken place before our eyes with breathtaking speed. The changes in the media, their ways and means to reach large audiences of different cultural and national identities have far-reaching consequences for the concept of our international information mandate as well. This relates to our information products, to their proportion in print, audio and visual material, to their production and design. This relates to our liaison functions with the press both here at Headquarters and away from it. And this implies at the same time a continuous search for the best possible co-operation with the media and the most diverse information organizations.

My office, through its Programme Evaluation and Communication Research Unit, has therefore given greatest attention to a comprehensive reviewing of our abilities to promote to the greatest extent possible an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations among the peoples of the world. This work is based

on a two-pronged approach to access public opinion about the United Nations in different countries and at the same time to evaluate our own information products as tools to create awareness and understanding of and support for the United Nations. There is a close linkage between the product and the potential audience which allows us to gauge the impact of our work.

The results of our world-wide public opinion polling programme, launched in 1989, show that the Organization's performance ratings and its image have improved substantially since 1985. A majority of people in all the countries polled to date believe that the United Nations is doing a good job. So far, a total of 18 countries have been surveyed; during 1990, surveys will be conducted in about 10 other countries.

As I indicated earlier, I should now like to introduce formally the various reports which the General Assembly, in its resolution 44/50, has requested to be submitted to this Committee. The first, which is contained in document number 2, is a rather comprehensive exposition of the activities of the Department of Public Information related to specific fields of its mandate, namely:

(a) Co-operation with UNESCO and with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

(b) International peace and security;

(c) The World Disarmament Campaign;

(d) Decolonization and the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories;

(e) Human rights;

(f) Racial Discrimination;

(g) Women and their role in society;

(h) Economic and social development;

(i) Environment;

(j) Campaign against illicit trafficking of narcotics and drug abuse;

(k) African economic recovery and development;

(l) The independence process of Namibia;

(m) Modern technologies in the work of the Department;

(n) Strengthening of information centres;

(o) Co-ordination of information activities of the United Nations system.

As you can see, the report is extremely comprehensive and I shall not attempt to repeat here its contents, but of course I wish to assure you that I and my colleagues are prepared to answer any questions that may arise related to it.

The next report which I have the honour to introduce, contained in document number 3, describes the Department's activities related to the policies and practices of apartheid, with particular reference, as requested in resolution 44/50, to the coverage activities of the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa, held from 12 to 14 December 1989.

Finally, in document number 4, the Committee has before it a report on the public information activities of the United Nations pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine.

The three reports to which I have referred are those mandated by General Assembly resolution 44/50 of 8 December 1989 and supplement the comprehensive report submitted to the General Assembly at its last session, contained in document A/44/653.

The Committee also has before it two reports submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 43/50 H of 5 December 1988. The first of these, in document A/44/698, was submitted to the last session of the Assembly and deals with the assessment of needs for technical assistance to radio stations that are broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa. The second, in document A/45/162, is submitted through this Committee for consideration by the Assembly at its forty-fifth session, and deals with a study of existing and potential interest in broadcasting United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes, as well as with a survey of the extent to which audiences in selected urban centres in South Africa listen to them.

The two last documents mentioned provide, I believe, a sound basis for follow-up action in this area. I will welcome your comments and guidance on the recommendations contained in these documents. You may wish also to note that the Department commissioned an opinion poll in South Africa about the United Nations. The results of this poll complemented the three studies and provide a useful basis for information strategies which would maximize the impact of United Nations efforts against apartheid.

I should now like to address some aspects of the Department's major endeavours.

While daily press briefings by the Spokesman continued to be the focal point for highlighting the Secretary-General's activities and his position on various issues, we have put in place a flexible machinery to handle press queries for reactions to late-breaking news at almost any time of the day.

In trying to meet the growing demand for interviews with the Secretary-General, we have, through the Executive Media Service, worked to ensure the best possible exposure for the United Nations in broadcast and print media in all regions of the world. With the same goal in mind, Spokespersons accompanying the Secretary-General on his official travels do extensive advance work with the media of the countries visited, help to organize press conferences and briefings, and provide regular updates on the trip for the press corps at Headquarters.

A conscious effort has been made to improve access by the press corps to certain high-level United Nations officials. In the past year, the Executive Media Service (EMS) helped to organize over 30 public press briefings by Special

Representatives of the Secretary-General or other top officials and many one-on-one sessions.

A major thrust of the activities of EMS has been aimed at expanding and strengthening its ties with media representatives in various geographical regions, by conducting editors' round tables at Headquarters and launching outreach programmes for media specialists. Following the success of the Francophone Editors' Round Table in 1988, a Latin American and Caribbean Editors' Round Table was organized last November for 25 leading correspondents from 21 countries of the region, as well as Portugal and Spain. The participants, who were briefed by the Secretary-General and other top-level officials of the Secretariat, described the seminar as both highly educational and newsworthy. Preparations are under way for similar round tables for Asian editors and for German-speaking editors from the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria. Later this year, EMS envisages continuation of an editors' outreach programme it began in 1989 in Hungary and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

As envisaged in the restructuring of the Department, which has now been fully implemented, the Communications and Programme Management Division, through its four thematic sections "Peace and security"; "Economic and social development and human rights"; "Apartheid, Namibia, and Palestine"; and "African recovery and development", develops and co-ordinates integrated information strategies centring on priority issues of the United Nations. The Communications Support Section, which provides art design and layout, writing and exhibit services, and the Special Programmes Section, which focuses on special observances, co-productions and educational programmes, work with the thematic sections to bring these information programmes to life.

The Communications and Project Management Division, in its activities over the last year, succeeded in enhancing further its role as focal point for the elaboration and implementation of information programmes on major themes. The Division maintains close working relations with the substantive departments of the Secretariat.

As I indicated earlier, the report that is before the Committee on the activities of the Department contains ample material of the activities developed by the Division related to various priority themes, and I will not repeat what is contained in that report. Allow me to supplement that report by referring to some of the activities envisaged for the future.

For instance, African recovery and development continues to be an important part of the Department's work. The widely-read Africa Recovery newsletter is recognized as the foremost periodical in this field. The Africa Recovery Unit of the Department will be releasing soon a comprehensive, multi-media information kit on the report and recommendations of the group appointed by the Secretary-General to look into the question of African commodities and export diversification. The Unit will also continue its series of Briefing Papers, started in 1989 with "African Debt: The Search for Solutions", by examining the necessity for and constraints to regional economic integration in Africa, to be followed by a review of the status of governmental efforts to forge effective population goals and strategies. The Unit's promotion and media coverage activities will focus on the London conference on the continent's economic crisis of 6 June, organized by the United Kingdom All Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development. The conference is

co-sponsored by the Secretariat of the United Nations Africa Recovery Programme's steering Committee.

A highlight of this year's efforts will be the second Africa Recovery international journalists tour. In view of the forthcoming LDC conference, these journalists from some of the world's most influential newspapers, including from the African media, will visit the United Republic of Tanzania and Togo, two countries listed among the least developed. The tour is being supported by UNDP.

In conjunction with the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in 1992, we have worked closely in recent weeks with the secretariat of the Conference to develop a comprehensive information campaign, including print, visual and electronic media. Part of our preparations for the Conference is the establishment of a computer-based newsletter and information network by which data on environment and development will be fed to the United Nations Information Services (UNISER) data bank system for use by media and other redisseminators. This conference is clearly a major United Nations initiative and will thus be the focus of a great deal of DPI activity between now and June of 1992, as well as in the follow-up stage.

The end of 1989 saw the staging of two special programmes here at Headquarters which I would like to mention. The first was an event to celebrate the adoption in November 1989 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was produced in co-operation with UNICEF and the Centre for Human Rights. The second was a symposium for World AIDS Day, held on 1 December in co-operation with the WHO Liaison Office at the United Nations and the United Nations International School featuring prominent personalities from the world of medicine who are involved in the fight against AIDS.

The Department continues to publicize the work of the United Nations on drug abuse control. The special session of the General Assembly on this subject in February was the occasion of a concentrated DPI effort, which led to significant media coverage of the event, especially in the host country. Coming up in April in London is the World Ministerial Summit to Reduce the Demand for Drugs and to Combat the Cocaine Threat. The Department will be responsible for press coverage, publicity related activities and media liaison. For the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in June 1990, a major photographic exhibit, entitled "Picture a Drug-Free World", is being prepared in co-operation with the International Photographic Council.

Dissemination of information about United Nations activities concerning the status of women continues to be one of the priorities of the Department. The tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was observed on 18 December 1989, with a press kit containing information on the role of women in society and on the status of the Convention. In observance of International Women's Day, an NGO briefing was held, a poster, a documentary film and a feature article produced. Preparation for a video co-production on "Literacy and Women" are under way. I personally took the initiative to establish an inter-agency advisory group on information activities for women to promote communication and co-operation between the various United Nations bodies concerned with issues relating to the advancement of women. At its first series of meetings, held during the last quarter of 1989, the advisory group provided input to create a new "Calendar of United Nations Women's Events". My own speaking engagements - over the last year in North America and in Europe, and later

this year in Japan - include on a regular basis the issue of the status of women in society.

This summary covers a large number of issues and products. However, in addition, a variety of promotional material is produced on other issues such as human rights, decolonization, racial discrimination, crime prevention, the disabled and the world economy and debt. Indeed, as is readily obvious from this enumeration, the steadily increasing number and complexity of the issues with which the Communications and Project Management Division must deal poses increasingly difficult problems as regards staff and financial resources.

It is important to mention that the Department has produced educational videos and accompanying teaching guides on several of our mandated priority issues: anti-apartheid, peace-keeping, the question of Palestine, African recovery and development. The series, called About the United Nations, includes reading texts, suggested exercises, maps and photographs. The educational video kits are produced in co-operation with outside production companies in English, French and Spanish, and are aimed at secondary school students. Literacy is the theme of another educational package which will be distributed shortly.

I wish also to inform you that all provisions have been made to continue the Department's intern training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

The Department recognizes the importance of radio in creating public awareness and understanding of the Organization, especially in developing countries. The variety of news and taped programmes produced and the production schedules of all regional units continue uninterrupted - namely, at least 34 different taped programmes in 19 languages plus 15 news magazines and telephone feed bulletins in nine languages. During the first three months of 1990, more than two dozen new broadcasting stations have requested radio material in addition to the 1,550 recipients already using it. Our taped programming output in fact, has increased with programming begun this year on the status of women in Arabic, French and Spanish. Also, a weekly programme in Urdu is now being produced here at Headquarters. As far as the daily telephone news bulletins are concerned, between 27 and 30 stations take the bulletins regularly, at their expense, representing a significant increase in regular users since a year ago. The actual number of new users is growing as more stations take feeds occasionally. In addition, bulletins in Spanish are provided to radio stations in Latin America and Europe through the electronic mail network.

During 1989, more than 160 radio programmes were produced on anti-apartheid themes in English, which were adapted in five other languages by the Anti-Apartheid Radio Section. Central programmes and regional units of Radio Section produced at least 60 documentaries and magazines in eight languages. In addition, six video films on anti-apartheid - UN in Action and others - were produced in four languages. Anti-apartheid will be one of the major themes to which the Department will pay special attention in its information strategies in 1990.

In accordance with the recommendations of this Committee, the Department is expanding co-operation with external broadcasting networks for wider transmission of United Nations radio programmes by short wave. Two more broadcasting organizations, Radio Tanzania and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, have agreed to provide the Department with transmitter facilities for our English and Kiswahili

news programmes free of charge. I wish to express my appreciation to the organizations concerned, and to encourage others to assist us in reaching listeners with up-to-date information. We are continuing our efforts, with success, to reach more listeners in Europe where radio stations do not normally use our programmes. The Italian Radio Relay Service now broadcasts United Nations radio programmes to Europe every Sunday on short and medium wave. The Fiji Broadcasting Commission, is also presenting our radio programme to its audience and will expand with the Suva-produced United Nations in the Pacific. Radio Ethiopia is currently considering transmission of UN Newsbrief and Bonjour L'Afrique through its external service. Radio Vatican receives our radio taped programmes in English, including anti-apartheid in Spanish and in Portuguese for use in its broadcasts. The Department is currently undertaking all efforts to find new slots for transmission of our radio programmes by broadcasting organizations world wide.

The UN in Action TV series, produced in five languages, often in co-production with other agencies and programmes of the system, continues to gain new audiences around the world. It is broadcast at least twice a week by CNN News network to 90 countries, including the United States, and we are getting a growing list of paying subscribers in Europe, Japan and elsewhere. Starting this month, Asahi Cable TV in Tokyo with a subscriber list of 400,000 is televising a weekly 30-minute programme which consists of UN in Action, documentaries and our television news packages. The Department has succeeded in placing the French version of UN in Action for screening on Air Afrique flights. Efforts continue to get other commercial airlines to use our products for in-flight screening.

Discussions are under way for the regular transmission of UN in Action over One World Channel, a satellite channel that broadcasts all over Western Europe. Our other regular television series, World Chronicle, has a new look and an increasing number of broadcast outlets.

Among the visual products which have been released or are under production, are video documentaries on the role of UNTAG in Namibia, on South-South co-operation, on problems of large cities, a film on women in the workplace and an animated cartoon film on prejudice.

The Department has initiated a monthly Russian language TV magazine, which is broadcast regularly in the Soviet Union. We are awaiting responses from African broadcasters to a pilot regional magazine for Africa in English and French.

I am pleased to report that we are continuing our successful collaboration with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries. Following a visit to Belgrade last September by an officer of the Department, we have enhanced coverage to the Pool in terms of content and length of items. We send between 70 to 80 items per month dealing primarily with all economic and social issues, development, the environment, human rights, as well as special United Nations events and occasions.

In the field of publications, we have just concluded new agreements with publishing houses overseas for producing various language editions of the UN Chronicle magazine. The Chinese and Russian editions, previously translated in New York but printed in Beijing and Moscow, respectively, will now be done in those cities in all production phases. The Arabic edition, hitherto translated and printed in New York, will be produced in Cairo by the Al Ahram publishing house.

Of particular importance for reaching wider audiences are the Department's activities in the field of external publication. Through personal contacts with prominent publishing houses, we succeeded in getting more United Nations titles published in languages other than English and, at the same time, in achieving much greater circulation. In 1989, a number of significant titles have been released in Mexico, Japan and Italy. Among these titles is a study of great topicality on the Status of World Environment. A hundred titles are currently placed for evaluation by publishers; since a majority of titles offered by the United Nations and the specialized agencies are of interest to the academic and scientific communities, special emphasis has been given to establish close relations with university publishing houses.

Speaking of external publications, I wish to inform the Committee that the Yearbook of the United Nations is now being published commercially in the Netherlands. It is expected that the distribution will be doubled and the timeliness of this publication improved.

Our effort to improve the quality of our information products is coupled with our effort to improve the timeliness of their dissemination. As I have repeatedly stressed in various forums, information material that does not reach its destination on time is useless. Therefore, we embarked in 1989 on an extensive programme to modernize our means of communicating with all regions of the world. As part of this programme, we are continuing the dual process of enhancing our network of information centres and services and strengthening their capabilities to reproduce our information materials in the field and reach wider audiences. It gives me great satisfaction to inform you that thanks to the efforts of a number of centre Directors, press kit and other information products on priority issues, such as international security, decolonization, human rights, anti-apartheid and development, have been adapted in local languages and have thus found wide distribution.

Over the last year we have continued to strengthen our information centres and services. We are currently supplying 28 more centres with their first micro-computers, bringing to 54 the total of centres equipped with this technology. Most of the 45 facsimile machines available to United Nations information centres have been installed and are now operational. In addition, 59 field offices - 23 United Nations information centres and 36 UNDP offices - are now connected to the Department's electronic mail system. This new communication technology is expected to improve to a great extent the ability of our field offices to communicate with Headquarters and to disseminate information material in a more efficient and timely manner.

But most important for our endeavours in strengthening our activities and functional capabilities in the field is the role of our centre Directors, their ability to address special target audiences on the one hand, and to evolve close relations with the local press, with broadcasting organizations and other redisseminators of information on the other. As a result of the restructuring process, Department outreach activities through United Nations information centres have gained momentum in streamlining and efficiency. The process of developing mutually beneficial relations between the Department and UNDP in the field has continued to receive particular attention and will be pursued.

In close co-operation with the Office of Human Resources Management, the Information Centres Division is looking into ways to provide the training of staff

needed to keep up with the pace of technological advances in the Department. A Department of Public Information/Office of Human Resources Management task force is currently reviewing the functions of centre information and reference assistants, to ensure that local professional staff at each information centre have the required skills and training.

During 1989, the global network of United Nations information centres co-operated, as in the past, with major intergovernmental organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity, for political liaison and information exchange.

The increasing demand for information materials to be distributed by the Department, as well as our expanding services to the mass media, non-governmental organizations and the general public, indeed reflect the renewed public interest in the role and work of the United Nations.

We have to service an ever increasing number of journalists coming to Headquarters to cover United Nations meetings. During the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, for example, we have issued new or renewed accreditation to 2,150 media representatives from 87 countries.

It gives me satisfaction to report that all our information products on priority issues are now distributed in both English and French language. This includes pamphlets, brochures, media kits, posters and the full range of the Department's numerous audio and visual products such as Bonjour l'Afrique, Femmes, Perspectives Internationales and L'ONU en Action. Since 1988 all the press releases on meetings at Headquarters and on the Secretary-General's activities are available without interruption in the two languages as well.

The number of non-governmental organizations we work with is also increasing. More than a thousand national and international non-profit citizens' voluntary organizations, based in nearly 100 countries, are now associated with the Department. This represents a 24 per cent increase over the past two years in the number of NGOs served by the Department. These organizations help the Department carry out its mandate of building public support and understanding for the purposes and principles of the Charter and promoting public awareness of the activities of the United Nations system.

Through our Institutional Relations and NGO Section, we provide non-governmental organizations with information materials and programmes on all major political, economic, social and humanitarian subjects on the United Nations agenda. The briefings programme for non-governmental organizations is closely co-ordinated with the topical campaigns organized by the Communications and Project Management Division. Between 150 and 200 representatives of national and international non-governmental organizations attend the weekly briefings organized by the Department, at which senior United Nations officials and delegates from Permanent Missions to the United Nations present and discuss current topics. We also provide assistance to individual non-governmental organizations in organizing education and information programmes linking United Nations issues with local, national and international concerns.

The annual Department of Public Information non-governmental organizations conference remains the cornerstone of the Department's information programme for non-governmental organizations. Last year's conference, held in September just

prior to the opening of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, had as its theme "Environment and Development: Only one Earth". The three-day conference was attended by nearly one thousand participants representing 496 non-governmental organizations from 44 countries - the largest attendance of any non-governmental organizations conference organized by the Department. This year's conference, on the theme "A World Safe for Children - Meeting the Challenge in the 1990s", will be held from 12 to 14 September, immediately prior to the World Summit for Children.

Speaking of the increased role of non-governmental organizations, I should like to mention here the work of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service. The Service is an inter-agency group, created by the Joint United Nations Information Committee, with the Department serving as the lead sponsor, and UNCTAD as the administering agency. Until recently, there have been separate Services in Geneva and New York; but two months ago, the sponsors agreed to unify the Services, with a single co-ordinator, based in Geneva but with a continuing presence in New York. The primary goal of the Liaison Service is to build citizen and non-governmental organizations support in donor countries for development. In the months ahead, the Service will pay particular attention to women and development, and to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The renewed public interest in the United Nations is also reflected in the growing number of people visiting the Organization. At Headquarters alone, 515,000 visitors took the guided tour in 1989 - an increase of 45,000 over the previous year. The Headquarters tour is offered in 23 languages, seven days a week.

Our Public Services Section is working to create a special Children's Tour, including video presentation, hands-on exhibits and computers, so that children are made more aware of the world around them, of the problems faced by children in other countries, and also of what the United Nations is doing to help solve these problems. A model of the proposed tour can be viewed in the public lobby of the General Assembly building.

In late 1989, the Section went "on-line", with the computerization of group reservations for the guided tour. Outreach to promote the United Nations as a public attraction was also increased and expanded. Last summer, for example, with the assistance of the Communications Services Section of the Communications and Project Management Division, the Public Services Section produced five large-scale photo enlargements inviting people to visit the United Nations. The posters were mounted and displayed - at no cost to the United Nations - in three terminals at JFK international airport: the International Arrivals terminal, TWA terminal and American Airlines terminal.

Those photographs have since been made into posters, for the public and for world-wide distribution through United Nations information centres which helped us arrange for display at international airports in the field. Replies received thus far from Rabat, Brussels, New Delhi, London, Copenhagen, Baghdad and Sydney indicate strong interest as well as commitments to display the posters. Placement of additional posters as "fillers" is also being arranged at JFK, LaGuardia and Newark airports and discussions are under way with the New York City Transit Authority to have the posters mounted in buses and subways.

Visits to the United Nations were also promoted through articles in in-flight magazines, among them Pan Am and Austrian Airways, and arrangements were made for free local radio spots to heighten public interest in the United Nations.

The number of people reached through group programmes at Headquarters and speaking engagements outside New York also increased, in large part through the growing use of radio and television. In addition, the United Nations is soon to become a "contract vendor" for the New York City Board of Education, which would permit even those schools with limited resources to take the guided tour and would list the United Nations in the Board's Arts and Cultural Education Network catalogue. Still in the planning stage is a series of briefings/film screenings on various United Nations issues for the regular public who take the Headquarters tour.

Along with responding annually to more than 50,000 requests for United Nations information material, we have also adopted a more pro-active approach to dealing with the public: our Public Services Section participated last year in a New York City Teachers' Fair, and is currently examining with educators and others ways to develop information material to supplement the proposed Children's Tour. One item planned would be a children's newsletter, aimed at younger audiences, and one item already produced and disseminated through various boards of education and individual schools is "Worldly Wise", a kind of trivial pursuit game targeted primarily to high school students. The Section is also currently updating the format and content of materials more frequently requested by the public.

I referred earlier to our efforts to introduce technological innovations at our information centres. In addition, we are continuing to expand our co-operation with Global Educators Motivators (GEMNET), a non-governmental, non-profit organization, for the dissemination of United Nations information materials, utilizing at no cost to the United Nations a computer-based information system called United Nations Information Services (UNISER). Since March of this year, press releases are being sent to UNISER for redissemination to educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and Governments through their PC systems at the same time they are released to journalists at Headquarters, and plans are being drawn up to disseminate through GEMNET other printed material such as feature stories and the Journal of the United Nations.

In the introductory part of my statement, I hinted at the challenges of technological and perceptional requirements which must be met, if we are to effectively fulfil our basic mandate - i.e., to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world. To achieve this goal, we must compete for media and public attention in an ever more information and data-saturated world; we must communicate the message of the United Nations to a full spectrum of very different "publics" throughout the world; while addressing multicultural audiences, we must present the various aspects of any given issue in a logical and coherent manner, using different media, in several languages; and we must ensure that our message reaches our targeted audiences.

The key concepts here are product quality and timeliness in product distribution - two paramount conditions for the success of any information and communication strategy.

Permit me at this point to cite two examples of technological innovation which could further enhance our efforts toward fulfilling the Department's mandate.

CD-ROM (Compact disk-read-only memory) technology allows for vast amounts of information to be available at a touch of a button from a small disk read on a computer monitor. Be it in the field of science or medicine, economics, environment, agriculture, public policy or international law and treaties, an

entire collection of library materials can be stored on each easily transportable disk. In close co-operation with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and eventually with all other United Nations libraries, United Nations information centres could become depositories of documentation targeted to specific audiences. With such inexpensive technology, it would be possible to transfer directly to all countries through United Nations information centres vast amounts of information and documentation now available only at the libraries of the United Nations system in New York, Geneva, Vienna and the regional economic commissions. This would allow the centres to meet specialized local demands for information and documentation on issues and activities of the United Nations system, and would transform each information centre into an invaluable link in the network of information flow.

Another information channel under active development is the United Nations video-disc project recently authorized by the General Assembly. While its initial aim is to store and disseminate official United Nations documentation, it could obviously be used as well for public information material, including photographs. It is our intention to explore this area with the managers of this project.

Looking into the future of the Department of Public Information and preparing to meet the challenges ahead, we intend to move into a combination of digital technology for archives storage of television meetings coverage and half-inch Betacam technology for the acquisition of footage in the field. The Department acquired its first videotape machine in the third quarter of 1989, and will purchase the second this year. It is expected that it will take three to four years, into the biennium 1992-1993, before a complete transition will have been made into this modern technology. It cannot be done any faster because of budgetary constraints, constraints which affect all of our operations. HDTV - High Definition Television - is another area into which the Department is moving by the production of an HDTV video spot promoting the United Nations. At the same time we are studying the extent to which the Organization can benefit from RSS - Radio Satellite Service - a new technology capable of providing digital audio signals from a satellite directly to listeners. We are also looking into the feasibility of introducing remote-controlled television coverage in some selected meeting rooms at Headquarters.

We, obviously, cannot embark on a new information strategy by ourselves. To disseminate information effectively, we depend in particular on the co-operation of Member States, public and private media organizations, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations supportive of the United Nations.

The Department, through the universality of the message it is asked to convey, shares in the responsibility of promoting the understanding of the aims and purposes of the United Nations and, thereby, the achievement of those aims. For this, we need a climate conducive to a wider and better balanced dissemination of information and a pluralistic expression of universal human values.

This Committee in the discharge of its mandate, is in a unique position to contribute to the successful achievement of those lofty goals.

Once again, I wish you full success in your work.

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